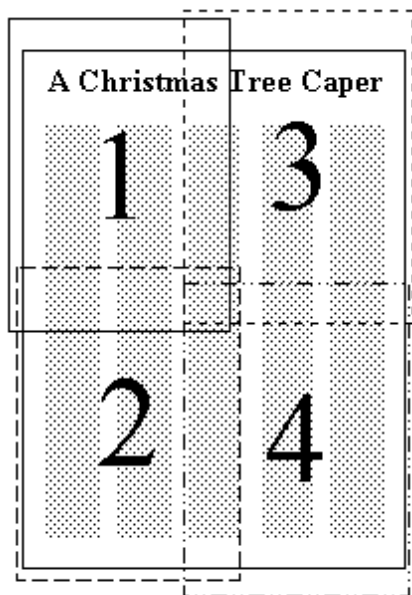


NOTE: This newspaper appearance was divided and enlarged to fill 8 ½" x 11" pages, roughly in the manner shown below.



# A Christmas Tree Caper

By JACK RITCHIE

**E**VIDENCE is evidence, and so I waited until she cut down the six-foot-high fir tree before I stepped out of hiding. "Just what do you think you're doing?" I demanded sternly.

She was in her early twenties and her blue eyes indicated only mild astonishment. She looked at the hatchet in her hand and at the fallen tree. "I'm cutting a Christmas tree. I thought that was pretty obvious." She brushed snow from the knees of her red hunting pants. "Just who are you? The game warden?"

I nodded and took out my notebook.

She regarded me with interest. "The one who walks into trees?"

I flushed slightly. Last summer after I'd arrested the Kranz twins, I'd looked over my shoulder to see if they were following me to my car with their fish, when from nowhere the tree materialized and I happened to walk into it. Now I searched my pockets for a pen. "I suppose you're going to tell me that you can't afford to buy a Christmas tree?"

She smiled. Really a nice smile. "Of course I can. But this is so much more fun, don't you think?" She brazenly inspected the tree. "Rather nice, isn't it?"

I couldn't find the pen and so I took the one she offered me. "I'm afraid you're under arrest. Your name, please?"

"Julie Walker. And yours?"

It was her right to know, of course, but I had the feeling her curiosity was more personal than the situation called for.

"Robert Cassatt. Your address?"

"River Falls." She grinned. "So you're the one who arrested the Kranz brothers."

I don't know why everyone dwells on that particular incident. Their total catch had been

She was being very helpful. "Thank you," I said. "We'll try him."

"Shall we take your car?"

I rubbed my neck. "I guess we'd better take yours. Mine is in a ditch on the other side of the hill." I hastened to check the grin rising on her face. "It could have happened to anybody. The roads are pretty slippery around here this time of the year."

**S**HE WATCHED me tie the tree to her car. "When your wife and your innocent children look at you under your own Christmas tree, won't you feel ashamed for what you're doing now?"

I went around to the passenger side of her car. "I don't have a wife, children, or a Christmas tree."

"You poor man," she said. But happily. "No wonder you're so mean."

"I'm not mean. But the law's the law."

Julie Walker drove the car to River Falls and we stopped in front of a white two-story building. The lawn was snow-covered and Christmas wreaths hung in the windows.

Judge Morley was a pleasant-faced man in his sixties. "Morning, Julie."

"Good morning, Uncle Billy," she said sweetly.

I had the feeling that I had run into another Kranz case.

"This is Robert Cassatt," Julie said. "He's the game warden."

Judge Morley chuckled. "The one who walked into the tree? You were knocked out for 10 minutes."

"It was closer to six," I said stiffly.

He kept smiling. "Are you sure the Kranz boys had one more fish than the limit? After all, everyone is allowed 10 trout a day and that's a lot of fish. You were lucky that the boys were there to bring you one."

## SHORT STORIES



"I suppose you're going

house and . . ."

Julie shook her head sympathetically. "That's terrible."

"No, it's a very nice boarding house. And the landlady has a tree in . . ."

"I have an idea," Julie announced, as though she had just discovered the North Pole. "Why don't you come to our place for Christmas Eve? Uncle Billy will be there and just about all of my relatives."

**I** HELD up a hand. "Just one moment, please. I don't think you'll want to invite me to dinner. Or for Christmas Eve." I looked at the judge. "Approximately an hour before your niece cut down her tree I saw someone else doing the same. And that tree was definitely on State property. Fourth post or not."

I went on bravely. "I wasn't close enough to recognize the man, but I did make note of the plaid jacket he wore—red and black—and I'll never forget the car. Apple green."

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I don't know why everyone dwells on that particular incident. Their total catch had been one fish over the limit and since neither one of them would admit responsibility for the extra fish, I had arrested both.

**JULIE WALKER'S** eyes went to a fresh tree stump fifteen feet to our left. "Ah, evidence of another crime. Did you arrest whoever did that?"

"Well . . . no."

Her voice was innocent. "He bribed you?"

I ignored that. "I happened to be on the other side of the ravine when I saw him cutting the tree. When I started over this way, I slipped and slid all the way to the bottom. By the time I climbed back up here, he had the tree already cut and was driving away."

She grinned. "And how I hate to give you two disappointments in one day, but this tree happens to be on my uncle's property."

I considered that with rising uneasiness. "You're positive?"

"Of course. He has twenty acres here. The property line runs from that surveyor's stake next to the big pine to the second fencepost west of the boulder next to the road."

I aligned myself between the two reference points. "You're wrong," I said after a moment. "The tree you cut is definitely on State property. By about five or six feet."

She verified that for herself and sighed. "All right. I'll concede. What do we do now?"

"I'll have to take you to Judge Turpin in Hastings."

"I happen to know that he's on vacation. Why not try Judge Morley in River Falls? It's only four miles from here."

"Good morning, Uncle Billy," she said sweetly.

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"It was closer to six," I said stiffly.

He kept smiling. "Are you sure the Kranz boys had one more fish than the limit? After all, everyone is allowed 10 trout a day and that's a lot of fish. You were lucky that the boys were there to revive you."

I wasn't too sure of that. Somehow during those crucial six minutes while I was unconscious, one of the fish had disappeared. I wished now that I had counted again when I came to, but I had merely blinked and taken the Kranz twins and their catch to Judge Turpin. He dismissed the case after a recount in his courtroom.

**JUDGE** Morley led us through a hall with several jackets hanging on pegs and into his living room. "Is this a visit Julie, or is there something I can do for you?"

"You're supposed to try me," Julie said cheerfully. "I'm under arrest for cutting down a fir tree on State property. I was just the tiniest bit over the boundary — just a little to the right of the second fence post next to the boulder."

The judge filled his pipe at the humidor. "The second fence post?"

Julie nodded. "By about five or six feet."

Morley smiled. "Well, then I don't think we need to go any further. The tree you cut is on my property. The line runs to the fourth post, not the second."

Yes, it was another Kranz case.

Julie smiled at me. "But as long as you're in River Falls, why don't you come to our house for dinner? My mother's a wonderful cook and I'm almost as good."

I cleared my throat. "I'd like to; however . . ."

"And while I'm being forward," Julie said. "Where are you spending Christmas Eve?"

"I have a room in a boarding

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## Christmas P

By JOHN REIDY

When taking Christmas pictures around the house, the average camera fan armed with a fixed focus camera and flash bulbs generally comes off pretty well as does the amateur movie maker with his automatic exposure controlled movie camera and photoflood bulbs.

It is when the picture-taker strays from this controlled area of photography into the never-never-land of time exposure, f stops, fill-flash, ASA ratings, Kelvin temperature and the law of reciprocity that things begin to blur.

**HOW OFTEN** have flash pictures been taken of a beautifully lighted tree in color only to become a bitter disappointment when the result showed a tree with the lights turned off. How did this happen? The answer is that the synchronized shutter speed for flash is always too short to expose for the tree lights, however bright they may appear to the eye.

The solution here is to set the camera on a table or tripod. The shutter is then adjusted to a time or bulb setting (even the simplest box cameras have this control). Any live subject in such a picture must remain still during the time exposure to record the tree lights and while the shutter is open, a manually operated flash is aimed at the ceiling and bounced into the picture as a "fill" light. The scene will now be well lit and each tree light will stand out in

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# SHORT STORY COMPLETE ON PAGE



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I took a deep breath. "In your hall there is a red and black jacket and in your driveway an apple green sedan."

Morley now grinned. "And so you're arresting me? In my own home?"

I felt like a man who kicks dogs and children. "I'm sorry, but there's nothing else I can do."

He chuckled. "Son, I admire your devotion to duty, but before you do anything rash, I think I ought to tell you something. The coat doesn't belong to me and neither does the car. Both of them belong to Melvin Kranz." He scratched his head. "Or is it Marvin? Anyway, one of the twins is in my basement right now repairing my washing machine."

Julie grinned. "Marvin and Melvin not only dress alike, but they drive the same car."

THE JUDGE nodded. "And so if you went downstairs and arrested Melvin—or Marvin—I'm afraid I'd have to dismiss

the charge unless you could positively identify which one of them you saw."

The judge patted my shoulder. "Son, I've known the Kranz boys all their lives. If they caught one more trout than they should have, it was an accident. And if one of them cut a tree on State land, I'm certain that was an accident, too. I gave Melvin—or Marvin—permission to take one of the trees on my property, but he must have strayed a little. They're really both as honest as the day is long and you'll like them once you get to know them."

Frankly, I thought I'd seen enough of the Kranz twins already.

"And now that we're friends again," Julie said. "You're spending Christmas Eve with us."

I did.

That was a year ago, and this year I'm spending Christmas Eve at the Walkers' again. As a relative.

By marriage, you know.

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## PHOTOGRAPHY

all its color to give life to the picture.

Variables the camera fan will encounter in these indoor or outdoor time-exposed color shots of Christmas lights will be many. These will depend on the speed and type of color film being used and the power of the flash coupled to its distance from the subject.

Much confusion will be avoided if the user of color film will read the fact sheet that manufacturers put in the box. This will clearly state what stop to use with a specified type of flash lamp or electronic flash. It will give the suggested shutter speed for synchronized flash and where filtering is required. Length of exposure for any given indoor or outdoor Christmas lighting display may be best determined by an exposure meter.

The fan with a box camera should use the fastest type of color film available. If you intend to shoot lighting displays ask the camera store for tungsten-type film. Daylight film may also be used for Christmas light pictures with good results but any supplementary lighting should be done with blue flashbulbs. Fill light for tungsten film on the other hand must be with clear flashbulbs.

A ONE-SECOND time exposure with fast color film should be about right for a box camera with its very slow lens. This of course will be done with the camera on a steady support and the shutter release moved slow-

ly with one hand while the other hand holds the camera down steady. If fill flash is being used, some other member of the family can fire it on the signal "open" given by the person who opens the shutter. For a flash gun that will only fire when attached to the camera it is only necessary to open the shutter for the time exposure to automatically set off the fill flash.

## Health Capsule

By MICHAEL A. PETTI, M.D.

IS ACNE CAUSED BY EATING TOO MANY SWEETS?



ALTHOUGH TOO MANY SWEETS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED A FACTOR IN ACNE, A RECENT STUDY INDICATES THAT IF YOU CUT DOWN ON SWEETS, YOUR ACNE DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER.

Health Capsule is not meant to be a diagnostic nature, but to supply helpful information.